



North Central Idaho News

CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

December's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate plunged four-tenths of a point from November to 3.9 percent. Trade and service hiring for the holiday season finally picked up although it was not as strong as it was one year earlier. Merchants reported opting to give permanent workers more hours during the 2006 holidays. Year-over-year unemployment was also down four-tenths of a percent from last December's rate of 4.3 percent.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Enrollment at Area Universities and Colleges

Roughly 800 students disappeared from the Palouse this spring after enrollment at the University of Idaho and Washington State University dipped. The universities each lost about 400 students since this time last year. The Moscow campus dropped from 10,578 students to 10,184 while the Pullman campus decreased from 17,335 to 16,929. The loss of students means each community will see a drop in everything from revenues to volunteers. Concerns over lost student resources have sparked discussions across both communities.

Dan Davenport, the University of Idaho's director of admissions, said the reasons for lower fall enrollment are still the same. According to Davenport, the improved economy is turning prospective students away from the classroom and towards work and paychecks. The rising costs of a university education can be a deterrent, too. While the student downturn is a concern to some, Davenport



The Administration Building, University of Idaho in Moscow.

North Central Idaho Table 1: Lewiston MSA Labor Force & Employment Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Dec 2006*	Nov 2006	Dec 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
<i>Seasonally Adjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	28,330	28,530	28,990	-0.7	-2.3
Unemployment	1,110	1,230	1,240	-9.8	-10.5
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.9	4.3	4.3		
Total Employment	27,220	27,300	27,750	-0.3	-1.9
<i>Unadjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	28,510	28,360	29,250	0.5	-2.5
Unemployment	1,140	1,170	1,260	-2.6	-9.5
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.0	4.1	4.3		
Total Employment	27,370	27,190	27,990	0.7	-2.2
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS					
<i>Goods-Producing Industries</i>					
Natural Resources & Mining	270	270	190	0.0	42.1
Construction	1,150	1,210	1,310	-5.0	-12.2
Manufacturing	2,950	2,940	3,080	0.3	-4.2
Wood Product Manufacturing	560	550	550	1.8	1.8
Food Manufacturing	30	30	40	0.0	-25.0
Paper Manufacturing	1,080	1,090	1,110	-0.9	-2.7
Other Manufacturing	1,280	1,270	1,380	0.8	-7.2
<i>Service-Providing Industries</i>					
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	5,510	5,500	5,500	0.2	0.2
Wholesale Trade	630	640	670	-1.6	-6.0
Retail Trade	3,550	3,520	3,580	0.9	-0.8
Utilities	90	90	90	0.0	0.0
Transportation & Warehousing	1,240	1,250	1,160	-0.8	6.9
Information	450	450	460	0.0	-2.2
Financial Activities	1,810	1,820	1,890	-0.5	-4.2
Professional & Business Services	1,510	1,550	1,620	-2.6	-6.8
Education & Health Services	4,530	4,500	4,490	0.7	0.9
Leisure & Hospitality	2,370	2,370	2,500	0.0	-5.2
Other Services	1,040	1,050	1,130	-1.0	-8.0
Government Education	2,530	2,560	2,510	-1.2	0.8
Government Administration	2,100	2,110	1,990	-0.5	5.5
Government Tribes	660	660	750	0.0	-12.0

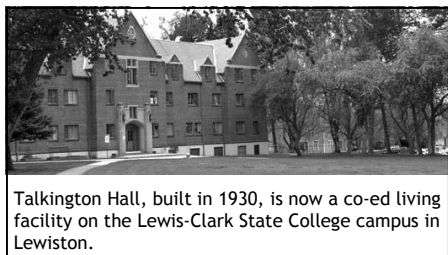
*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

said it is important to remember that Idaho's enrollment for fall 2005 included a record number of freshmen. Spring 2006 also was a record-setting semester for enrollment at Washington State. "Whenever you have a new record, it is always tough to better that record," Davenport said.

Enrollment at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, however, showed the slightest increase — one student — to 3,234 for the spring

semester. "It does appear we had good fall-to-spring retention," said Dean of Student Services Andy Hanson. He is seeing increases



Talkington Hall, built in 1930, is now a co-ed living facility on the Lewis-Clark State College campus in Lewiston.

in part-time students, which is typical when the economy is strong and more people are working. "People still want to go to college, but they're interested in doing it on a part-time basis because they have good jobs and they don't want to give that up." Distance learning is also becoming more prevalent with 4.3 percent more students taking such courses than a year ago. More than 1,000 students are now studying via the Internet or video conferencing, according to the college.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

CLEARWATER COUNTY

- Konkolville Lumber Co. near Orofino is being acquired by Tri-Pro Forest Products, which is owned by the Merritt family of Priest River. The deal includes Konkolville's sawing, drying and planing operations. Like Tri-Pro, Konkolville has been a family-operated company, founded in 1948 by Andrew Konkol. "Konkolville Lumber presents a natural extension of our high value products and services and is a good fit to Tri-Pro and our customers," said a company official. Konkolville Lumber is known for specialty products such as 1- to 2-inch thick laminated stock made from Douglas fir that is glued together to make arched beams for upper-end buildings like churches. The sawmill also makes products from cedar, grand fir, western larch and spruce. Tri-Pro is a leading producer of cedar products such as decking, siding, boards, patterns and trims. The Merritt family's other holdings include plants in Oldtown and Athol in Idaho and wholesale lumber trading companies in Boise and Portland, Ore.

IDAHO AND LEWIS COUNTIES

- Syringa General Hospital in Grangeville has been awarded \$45,800 to improve access to primary medical services in Idaho County. The money will help retain a family practice physician. The grant came from the Rural Health Care Access Program, which was established in 2000 to improve access to primary medical care and dental services in areas designated as having a shortage of primary care or dental health professionals. Challenges rural communities face in attracting and maintaining health care professionals are professional isolation, low reimbursement rates for health services and vulnerability to market and policy changes.

- St. Mary's Hospital and clinics in Cottonwood has received \$170,000 from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to buy equipment to digitize X-ray and ultrasound images. That permits an image to be sent or stored electronically. The images will become part of each patient's electronic medical record. "Having our images stored electronically will mean we can send them over the phone lines to radiologists around the world for immediate readings," said Heath Fox, radiology manager for St. Mary's and Clearwater Valley hospitals. "With equipment purchased through this grant, we'll also be able to put a person's images on a compact disc so they can easily carry it to an appointment with a specialist."
- Judd DeBoer, president of Brown's Industries Inc., which owns the old mill site in Riggins, plans to build small cabins and several tourist-related businesses on the site to enhance Riggins' outdoor tourism reputation and add to its general economy. The DeBoer family owns the Best Western Salmon Rapids Lodge in Riggins and Brundage Mountain Resort in McCall. DeBoer said although his family business intends to make money over the long term, "we do have a real fond spot in our hearts for Riggins. We've been associated with Riggins well over 50 years so anything we would do down there we would do because we like to do something positive for Riggins." DeBoer's father-in-law, Warren Brown, bought the Salmon River sawmill in the 1950s and operated it until the DeBoer family bought the property in 1980. About a year later, the mill burned to the ground and was never rebuilt. The loss of the town's major industry threw Riggins into a tailspin until townspeople began to capitalize on salmon and steelhead fishing, kayaking, rafting and jet boating.

LATAH COUNTY

- The newest research center at the University of Idaho isn't so new at all. The Palouse Research, Extension and Education Center combines four long-established farms and their programs in plant and animal research under a central administrator. "The idea was to bring everything together to better coordinate the plant and animal research activities that we have ongoing and to improve some efficiency in our operations," said Donn Thill who is the new administrator. The center's components include the H.C. Manis Entomology Research Laboratory, the Sixth Street greenhouse facility and the Idaho Foundation Seed program. There also is a groundwater research area, aquaculture laboratory and forest nursery, which are operated by other colleges of the universities. Thill said he hopes the shared organizational structure of the center will improve the efficiency of the farms' finances and their staffing.

NEZ PERCE AND ASOTIN COUNTIES

- A new clinic for military veterans is tentatively scheduled to open in Lewiston later this year. It will operate five days a week, replacing the current two-day-a-month clinic, said Larry Werst of the Walla Walla Veterans Affairs office. The clinic will provide primary medical and mental health care for veterans in Lewiston and surrounding counties.
- Twin City Foods, a Lewiston pea processor, is permanently closing its vegetable processing operations in Lewiston, said Mike Weiss, plant manager of the Lewiston division of Twin City Foods. The announcement ends two years of waiting, which started when all but a skeleton crew was laid off after the 2004 harvest. Twin City Foods blamed the closure on bumper crops in 2003 and 2004 in combination with a reduction in consumer demand. Rather than eating home-cooked meals with meat, potatoes and vegetables, more families are buying take-out food or prepackaged dinners at grocery stores, Weiss said. Twin City Foods has no immediate plans to sell the property and is continuing to

evaluate the site's value to the company. Others affected by the closure are about 30 north central Idaho and southeastern Washington farmers, who grew peas for Twin City Foods and about 200 seasonal employees.

- Potlatch Corp. will eliminate 37 jobs from its resource group, including 20 in Idaho. Most of the employees who were cut in Idaho worked in north central Idaho, said Matt Van Vleet, Potlatch's Lewiston spokesman. Potlatch is the largest private land owner in Idaho with 670,000 acres. The changes are part of a plan to restructure the resource group that monitors the growth of trees on Potlatch land and schedules treatments and harvests, Van Vleet said. The reorganization puts employees with expertise in areas such as forestry and wildlife management into a single management group.

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